



Bauckham, Richard and Carl Mosser, eds.

The Gospel of John and Christian Theology

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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Over the last couple of years I've become a big fan of books that are simple collections of essays, whether they be *Festschriften*, published papers from an academic conference, or a call for various scholars to get together and contribute to the education of laymen. The reason I enjoy books like this is due to the fact that I can jump around when reading. Each chapter is a contained unit within itself, and rarely does reading one chapter require reading another before it. So I can start with the essays from my favorite authors and work my way back to the lesser-known contributors, or I can reverse that and work my way forward. Whatever the case, there's more freedom in reading such books.

The Gospel of John and Christian Theology is a collection of essays that were originally presented at the first St. Andrews Conference on Scripture and Theology in 2003. In the introduction Richard Bauckham explains that: "*The aim was to bring biblical scholars and systematic theologians together in conversation about a biblical text that has played a formative role in Christian theology through the centuries.*" (x) He rightly notes the divide that exists between biblical studies and systematic theology and says that this conference and these papers were a means to bridge the gap "*by entering a conversation fruitful to both.*" (x-xi) But it's on this point that I question how successful this *book* really is.

Bauckham also says in the introduction that: "*The essays in this volume are the most tangible results [of the conference], though much that happened around the papers, including the lively interaction of many other scholars and students who attended the conference was also important.*" (xi) In my thinking, the things that happened around the papers are the most important when we're talking about bringing the two disciplines into conversation with one another. Allow me to explain.

What we have in this book is a collection of essays from some very fine scholars. Names such as Richard Bauckham, Martin Hengel, Miroslav Volf, Jürgen Moltmann, and Rowan Williams line the pages. The essays themselves are thought provoking, and

worthy of praise even if the conclusions or methodology is not always agreed with. But the main problem as I see it is that they do not directly engage each other, with one exception. There are four pairs of papers in this volume, but one would expect that the first paper of each pair would be responded to in the second paper. This isn't the case except with Judith Lieu's "Anti-Judaism, the Jews, and the Worlds of the Fourth Gospel" (168-82) which was a direct response to Stephen Motyer's "Bridging the Gap: How Might the Fourth Gospel Help Us Cope with the Legacy of Christianity's Exclusive Claim over Against Judaism?" (143-67). It is at this juncture that we see genuine dialogue.

With regard to the other three sets of papers that were paired together:

1. "Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism" — Stephen C. Barton (3-18)
2. "Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism" — Miroslav Volf (19-50)

1. "The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: From What Perspective Should It Be Assessed?" — C. Stephen Evans (91-119)
2. "The Fourth Gospel as the Testimony of the Beloved Disciple" — Richard Bauckham (120-39)

1. "The Testimony of Works in the Christology of John's Gospel" — Murray Rae (295-310)
2. "On Guessing Points and Naming Stars: Epistemological Origins of John's Christological Tensions" — Paul N. Anderson (311-45)

They were simply calls for scholars from different disciplines to present on the same subject. Good papers, just not *dialogue*. Perhaps if the lively exchanges that resulted from these papers at the conference had been published as well, then we'd have more of an idea of the relative success of the endeavor.

Something else that irked me just a bit was the inconsistency of Greek and Hebrew when used. In some essays the Greek is transliterated (e.g., Murray Rae's essay), while in others it is not (e.g., Richard Bauckham's essay). In Martin Hengel's essay the Greek is not transliterated but the Hebrew is. It's a small point to complain about, but it seems easy enough to pick one method and stick with it in the process of editing and publishing. I'm pleased to say that footnotes were used as opposed to end notes, so they lose no points on that front, and three indices covering twenty-two pages round the book out (but sadly no subject index among them!).

At the end of the day these are good papers, but my contention is that the *book* itself (not the conference since I can't pretend to know what occurred outside of the book) failed to

really foster the dialogue that was intended. Perhaps this is something that will be improved upon in the next book of the series *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*. It's tough to rate this one because I did enjoy the various papers very much, but it keeps lingering in the back of my mind that when viewed as a whole the conversation as such simply wasn't there.